

VZCZCXYZ0001  
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHBO #0581/01 0262006  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
O 262006Z JAN 07  
FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2276  
INFO RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 7369  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 8620  
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ JAN LIMA 4687  
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA 9921  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 5340  
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL 3849  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RUEAWJA/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHDC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RHEHOND/DIRONDCP WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 000581

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/26/2017  
TAGS: [KJUS](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CO](#)  
SUBJECT: MEDELLIN SETS THE PACE ON SUCCESSFUL  
REINTEGRATION, BUT SECURITY CHALLENGES REMAIN

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer.  
Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d)

-----  
Summary  
-----

1. (C) Secretary of Government for Medellin Gustavo Villegas said on January 16 security in the city had improved dramatically over the last three years. Even regular criminal group members want to "demobilize." Still, Medellin faced security challenges associated with ex-paramilitary power struggles. Medellin's Chief Prosecutor told us he was concerned limited resources and leaks impeded his efforts to prosecute cases. End summary.

-----  
General Security Overview Positive...  
-----

2. (SBU) Secretary of Government for Medellin Gustavo Villegas, who is also the Director of Medellin's Peace and Reconciliation Program, told us on January 16 the security situation in the city had improved over the last three years, due to strong leadership, increased police presence, and programs that offered opportunities to demobilized paramilitaries. Compared to 1992 when over 600 homicides occurred in December alone, the number of murders for the city in 2006 was 696. Villegas hoped to reduce that number to 600 in 2007. The reduction has occurred primarily since 2003, when the total number of homicides in Medellin was 3,721.

3. (SBU) Villegas explained that Medellin owed its success to its ability to address the potential security, social, and economic risks of settling 4,130 demobilized paramilitaries since 2003 -- 13 percent of the national total -- in the city. The Mayor's Peace and Reconciliation Program led these efforts by assisting the demobilized with education, healthcare, psychological treatment, and employment. Over 80 percent of the demobilized paramilitaries have participated in one or all of the programs the city offered. It has also focused on community reconciliation activities for victims -- over 98,000 citizens have taken part. Moreover, the Mayor's Office has boosted the legitimacy of local government,

especially the police, by increasing visibility and outreach. The city's goal is to decrease former combatants reliance on ex-paramilitary authority structures.

¶4. (SBU) Medellin's Peace and Reconciliation Program Coordinator Jorge Gaviria told us on January 17 that even the city's gangs of common criminals wanted to "demobilize." Gaviria said more than 1,000 of the estimated 3,500 to 4,000 youth gang members in the city were prepared to leave the gangs in exchange for benefits similar to those offered to former paramilitaries. Villegas noted he is trying to lobby for a legal framework that could allow these types of criminals to benefit from the city's reintegration program. Meanwhile, Villegas explained the city is trying to offer a program to 10,000 impoverished youths (ages 16-29 years old) who never participated in gangs or illegal armed groups. The idea is to encourage their participation in education and labor programs and give them the opportunity to excel.

-----  
...But New Power Struggles Causing Unease  
-----

¶5. (C) Still, violence remains in Medellin. In recent months, several ex-combatants have been murdered, including former high-level paramilitary leaders. The Police Commander for Citizen Security in Medellin's Metropolitan Area, Colonel Perdomo, said 89 ex-paramilitaries have been killed since 2004, of which 56, or sixty-three percent, were murdered in ¶2006. Villegas said the recent increase in demobilized deaths could be revenge attacks related to their former paramilitary activities. Candidate for Antioquia Governor

Jaime Fajardo and former Medellin Secretary General Alonso Salazar largely attributed the murder of former paramilitaries to internal rifts among ex-paramilitary leaders held in Itagui Prison and to the influence of the Cali Cartel in Medellin. OAS Mission to Support the Peace Process in Colombia analysts said a "mafia mentality" still permeated the former AUC members; the AUC never had discipline within its ranks and always suffered from violent internal disputes over strategic areas and routes.

¶6. (C) Power struggles are likely behind several late 2006 murders of former paramilitaries. Jairo Angarita, second in command to ex-paramilitary leader Salvatore Mancuso in the Sinu and San Jorge Blocs, had threatened to tell prosecutors everything he knew before he was murdered several weeks later. The other two prominent former paramilitaries killed were Don Berna's right-hand Daniel Mejia, (AKA "Daniel") and Jorge 40's lieutenant Jefferson Martinez, (AKA "Omega"). Villegas said Don Berna had informed him the Cali Cartel was after Daniel. Medellin investigators told us Don Berna's claim that the Cali Cartel was responsible could be an attempt to divert attention from his own culpability, as Daniel was starting to work with Don Berna's emerging rival, Macaco.

-----  
Limited Resources and Leaks Hamper Effectiveness  
-----

¶7. (C) Medellin's Chief Prosecutor Guillermo Leon Valencia told us he was concerned limited resources and leaks impeded his efforts to properly follow key cases. Medellin, Colombia's second-largest city, was seriously underfunded and needed more prosecutors and judicial police. The situation was worse elsewhere in the country, he said. By their nature, leaks were difficult to prove and shut down, especially in relation to Vicente Castano, who Leon Valencia said had "thousands eyes and ears" in Medellin. Still, he is preparing his staff for the new accusatory system and has trained over 7,000 people, including police and other forensic investigators. He said his prosecutors managed 30-50 cases each and they were much better off than the judicial police, with 34 officers each handling 500 cases.